

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

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R 210800Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6099

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0369

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, MA

SUBJ: PROPOSED FAMILY PLANNING ORIENTATION TOUR FOR TWO MAL-
AGASY OFFICIALS

REF: STATE 049941

BEGIN SUMMARY: MALAGASY MIN SOCIAL AFFAIRS IS HOLDING UP FAM-
ILY PLANNING ORIENTATION TOUR TO SOUTHEAST ASIA OF TWO MALA-
GASY OFFICIALS, APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER INVOLVEMENT
IN POSSIBLE CONTROVERSY OVER FAMILY PLANNING WHEN HE ALREADY
SORELY PLAGUED BY ANOTHER BITTER PUBLIC CONTROVERSY. EMBA-
SSY ATTEMPTING RESOLVE PROBLEM THROUGH MOFA, BUT SENDING SEPTTEL
MESSAGE TO ALERT SPONSOR OF TOUR TO POSSIBILITY IT MAY HAVE TO
BE CANCELLED. END SUMMARY.

1. SERIOUS DIFFICULTY HAS ARISEN OVER ORIENTATION TRIP PATH-
FINDER FUND HAS ARRANGED TO INDONESIA, PHILIPPINES, AND THAI-
LAND FOR TWO MALAGASY OFFICIALS LISTED REFTEL. MINSOCIAL AFF-
AIRS DR. ZAFY HAS REFUSED SIGN REQUEST TO COUNCIL MINISTERS
FOR APPROVAL OF THEIR TRAVEL (AS REQUIRED BEFORE FOREIGN OFFICE
CAN ISSUE THEIR PASSPORTS).

2. EMBASSY CONVINCED MINISTER'S REFUSAL RELATES TO FACT THAT
HE HAS RECENTLY BECOME DEEPLY INVOLVED IN BITTER PUBLIC CON-
TROVERSY WITH MALAGASY MEDICAL PROFESSION WHICH HAS LED TO SEV-
ERAL PROFESSIONAL RESIGNATIONS IN HIS MINISTRY. WE HAVE LEAR-
NED FROM MOFA OFFICIAL THIS CONTROVERSY ARISES FROM DEEP-
SEATED ETHNIC CONFLICT BETWEEN COASTAL AND PLATEAU PEOPLE IN
MADAGASCAR. ZAFY, WHO IS "COTIER" FROM DIEGO-SUAREZ AREA, IS
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SAID TO BE PUSHING APPOINTMENT MEDICAL PERSONNEL ORIGINATING

FROM COASTAL AREA WITHOUT REGARD TO CONSEQUENCES. MERINA (MAJOR PLATEAU ETHNIC GROUP) DOCTORS ARE OUTRAGED AND HAVE REACTED STRONGLY AND PUBLICLY. JOINT MEETING OF BOTH SIDES HELD RECENTLY WITH HEAD OF GOVT GEN RAMANANTSOA, BUT WITHOUT REAL RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM.

3. WE BELIEVE ZAFY'S REFUSAL SIGN TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION REQUEST MOTIVATED BY DESIRE AVOID INVOLVEMENT IN POSSIBLE SECOND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE. THIS SEEMS CONFIRMED BY HIS REMARK TO DIRECTOR POPULATION DR. TIANDRAZA THAT PROPOSED TRIP OF TWO OFFICIALS COULD "PERHAPS BE MADE NEXT YEAR".

4. EMBASSY ATTEMPTING THROUGH FOREIGN OFFICE TO BRING ZAFY AROUND, WITHOUT RAISING HACKLES OF THIS KEY OFFICIAL TO POINT OF JEOPARDIZING FORWARD MOVEMENT TOWARD GOMR ADOPTION OF FAMILY PLANNING POLICY. AT SUGGESTION DIRECTOR BILATERAL RELATIONS RATSIMANDRESY, WE HAVE SENT FORMAL NOTE REFERRING TO MOFA'S NOTE OF LAST JUL PROPOSING TRIP, POINTING OUT ARRANGEMENTS NOW COMPLETED FOR IT, AND ASKING FOR CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPATION OF MALAGASY NOMINEES LISTED IN MOFA NOTE. MOFA HOPES BE ABLE USE OUR NOTE TO GET ZAFY'S APPROVAL.

5. MESSAGE ALERTING PATHFINDER TO PROBLEM TRANSMITTED SEPTTEL.

MENDENHALL

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